



THE HISTORY OF SPECIAL



From the U.S. Army Chief of Staff

In the early 1960s, General George H. Decker, the 22nd Chief of Staff of the Army, made special warfare a part of the Army's range of military operations by combining unconventional warfare with counterinsurgency. He did so in response to Communism's increased use of insurgency to destabilize vulnerable governments friendly to the United States. The Viet Minh victory over the French military at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, had shocked Western military professionals. President John F. Kennedy endorsed special warfare as critical to the nation's defense and charged the Army's Special Forces to lead that global fight for the Army. Gen. Decker realized expertise needed to successfully conduct UW in Communist-dominated occupied Europe and Asia would provide a sound base from which to develop a viable response to this form of warfare.

Today special warfare remains an important Army mission. Our primary combat maneuver element is the regionally expert Special Forces, the Green Berets, supported by our Psychological Warfare and Civil Affairs units. Conventional forces, such as the Regionally Aligned Forces, work alongside SOF in what is an increasingly complex world where the lines between war, conflict and competition are blurred. Unique in the Army and the Department of Defense inventory, special-warfare units are that component of the Army's Special Operations Forces that are specifically trained to work with and through indigenous forces, across the spectrum of conflict between unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense.

It is with Gen. Decker's vision in mind that I commend this article on special warfare. It clarifies the origins of the Army's special-warfare mission and our special operations forces that perform unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, Military Information Support Operations and direct-action operations as directed by the national command authority. ARSOF remains the vanguard of America's asymmetric defense and is 'point' for the nation's special-warfare mission.

Raymond T. Odierno
Chief of Staff of the Army

WARFARE

BY EUGENE G. PIASECKI



KEY PLAYERS From left: Brig. Gen. Robert A. McClure; Col. Russell W. Volckmann; Col. Aaron Bank; Col. Charles H. Karlstadt; Gen. John E. Dahlquist.

From 1952 through the end of the Vietnam War, the Army's leadership recognized special warfare as one of its core missions. Since the 1970s, the concept of special warfare has been superseded by the term special operations. First introduced during the Korean War by Brig. Gen. Robert A. McClure, the first chief of Psychological Warfare, special warfare described those military and paramilitary measures and activities related to unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency and psychological warfare. Army special operations was organized to operate interdependently in the Human Domain.

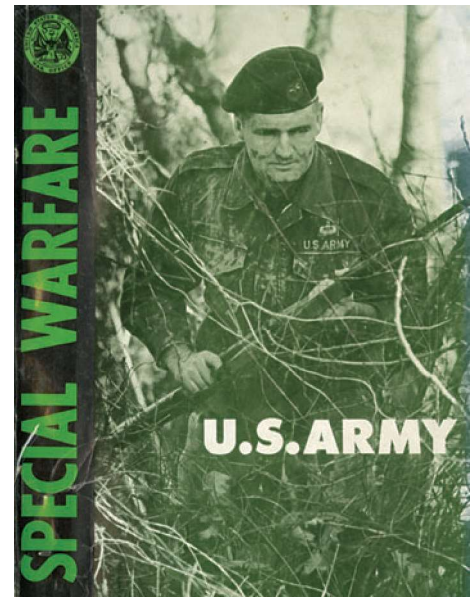
Reporting directly to Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff, McClure was charged with formulating and developing "psychological and special operations plans for the Army in consonance with established policies" and supervising "the execution of Department of the Army programs in these fields".¹ To do this, McClure created propaganda and unconventional warfare divisions in his Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare and filled it with World War II unconventional warfare veterans. In particular, Col. Russell W. Volckmann and Col. Aaron Bank were key staff officers. Col. Volckmann, author of FM 31-20, *Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* and FM 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*, codified special warfare operations as an integral element of conventional ground combat, and

not separate from it.² His combat Infantry experience led to his selection by McClure to prepare the position, planning and policy papers that established Special Forces within the Army. Consequently, the Army Field Forces and the Army staff created the Psywar Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to develop and refine Army Psywar and special warfare capabilities.

Under the tutelage of its first commandant, World War I and World War II Infantryman Col. Charles H. Karlstadt, the former Chief of Staff at Fort Benning, the U.S. Army Psychological Warfare Center and School was accredited by Army Field Forces on May 29, 1952.³ The school consisted of Psywar and Special Forces departments. The Psywar Center was responsible for developing and implementing Psywar and UW doctrine, tables of organization and equipment, tactics, techniques and procedures, education (course programs of instruction), field and training manuals and research, development, test and evaluation of Psywar and Special Forces equipment. The proponent for special warfare resided at Fort Bragg and the first Soldiers were being recruited, trained and organized to execute this new Army mission. On June 19, 1952, the Army's first Special Forces unit, the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was activated at Fort Bragg and commanded by Office of the Strategic Services veteran, Col. Aaron Bank.

The first Special Forces courses (officer and noncommissioned officer) for volunteers began on Oct. 22, 1952. While the focus was Europe, the Army took note of France's counterinsurgency operations in Indochina (1946- 1954) and activated a second Special Forces Group. The 77th Special Forces Group, based at Fort Bragg, was formed in October 1953, with the purpose of meeting SF global contingencies outside of Europe. Shortly thereafter, in December 1953, the 10th SFG (A) deployed to Germany to bring its expertise in unconventional warfare to the frontline of the Cold War.

Regional conflicts came to the forefront with the Vietminh victory over French forces at Dien Bien Phu. This prompted the Army to take measures to formally educate its leaders on UW and address strategies and tactics to counter insurgencies. On March 4, 1954, Gen. John E. Dahlquist, Chief of Army Field Forces, assigned responsibility to the Psywar Center to develop Army counterinsurgency doctrine, tactics and techniques as well as to publish the training literature on guerrilla warfare used to educate officers and sergeants.⁴ Communist-sponsored 'wars of national liberation' against colonial regimes and U.S.-supported post-World War II military dictatorships in Latin America had flared up like wildfire across the globe, in places such as Algeria (1954-1962), Aden (1962-1967), Angola (1961-1965). The Army



Far right: In 1962 "Special Warfare, U.S. Army" was published as a commander's reference to develop unit special warfare proficiency. U.S. Army Photos.

realized that for it to adapt to meet this emerging requirement, it had to incorporate special warfare as a core mission.

In December 1956, the renaming of the Psywar Center to the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center, gave official credence to this umbrella term. Gen. Dahlquist realized that the Army had to quickly prepare for enemy UW operations.⁵ The social, economic, political and psychological impacts of UW and COIN and counter warfare had to be incorporated in current and future Army contingency and war plans.⁶ The increasing emphasis on special warfare resulted in a host of articles appearing in Army publications.

In June 1960, Col. William H. Kinard Jr., a Coast Artillery officer and World War II veteran assigned to the Special Warfare Office, DA, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, explained special warfare in an article in Army Information Digest: "This is Special Warfare U. S. Army Style." His subsequent address to the Army Limited War Symposium in March 1962 in Washington, D.C., "The New Dimensions of Special Warfare," was very timely, and caught the attention of recently-elected President John F. Kennedy, an enthusiastic advocate.⁷ World events, that dictated a change in U.S. strategy, soon provided the right moment for integrating special warfare into the Army's mission profile.

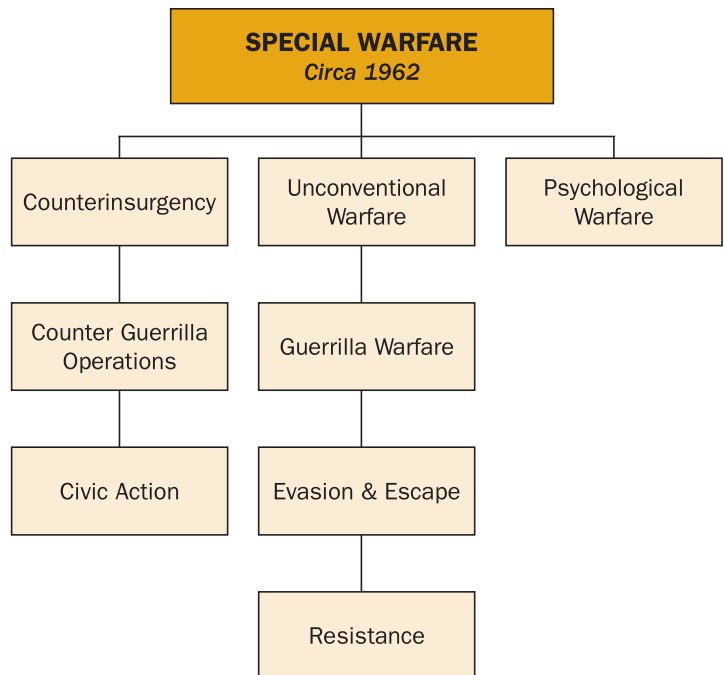
The ill-fated Bay of Pigs operation against Fidel Castro in Cuba caused Presi-

dent Kennedy to replace the Eisenhower administration's security strategy of nuclear deterrence with one of "flexible response." This meant that the American military had to field forces that were structured to deal with conflict at any level.⁸ In his State of the Union address on May 25, 1961, Kennedy directed Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara "to increase and reorient Special Forces and unconventional warfare units."⁹ Congress approved a 3,000 man increase in special warfare Soldiers. Gen. George H. Decker, the Chief of Staff, announced that the U.S. Army was "uniquely capable of confronting the Communists face-to-face in the struggle for freedom in the less developed countries."¹⁰ To implement this new strategy, the Army needed a new, more adaptable organization. The end result was the Special Action Force.

Gen. Decker's initial guidance was to form two regionally-oriented Cold War task forces each composed of an airborne brigade and a Special Forces group. After a careful analysis of the president's intent, the Army staff dropped the airborne brigade and changed the SAF mission from direct action to one of advising and assisting foreign countries dealing with "low intensity cold war situations."¹¹ Four Special Action Forces were formed around existing SF groups (SAF Asia - 1st Special Forces Group on Okinawa; SAF Middle East - 3rd Special Forces Group; SAF Africa

- 6th Special Forces Group in CONUS; and SAF Latin America - 8th Special Forces Group in the Canal Zone). Each SAF was built around the SF Group with a range of assigned specialty detachments, including Engineers, Military Police and Civil Affairs. The SAF was designed to augment in-country Military Assistance Advisory Groups with task organized mobile training teams. The SAFs assisted foreign armies to perform UW, COIN, civic action and nation-building activities, the cornerstones of foreign internal defense and development.¹² The SAF was ideally suited to support America's bipartisan national strategy of 'Communist containment,' which was expanded to stop the spread of insurgencies in the Third World. America was not going to rely exclusively on its nuclear arsenal to halt the growth of Communism.

President Kennedy emphasized economic development and political reform over military assistance to meet the preeminent threat of the day, Communist-supported 'wars of national liberation' in the Third World.¹³ In his remarks to the newly-commissioned lieutenants at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in June 1962, Kennedy emphasized special warfare in the Army: "To cite one final example of the range of responsibilities that will fall upon you, you may hold a position of command with our Special Forces, forces which are too unconventional to be called



conventional, forces which are growing in number and importance and significance, for we now know that it is wholly misleading to call this ‘the nuclear age,’ or to say that our security rests only on the doctrine of massive retaliation.”¹⁴

Kennedy’s remarks at the graduation reflected his belief in the importance of unconventional warfare. He established an Executive Department Special Group (Counterinsurgency) in January 1962 that reinforced his emphasis on UW. By this time, special warfare was so widely accepted that the Secretary of the Army, Elvis J. Stahr Jr., directed the Office, Chief of Information, Department of the Army, to publish “Special Warfare U. S. Army, An Army Specialty,” to help Soldiers “prepare for the performance of this most important mission.”¹⁵ Special Warfare was the answer for countering Communist-supported insurgencies in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

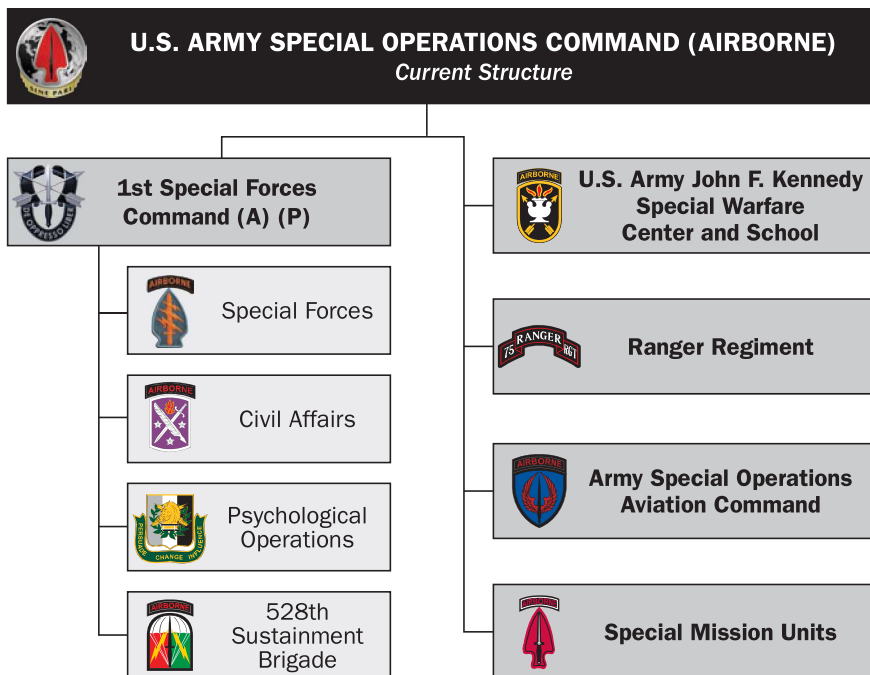
After the assassination of President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson gradually tilted the Internal Defense and Development emphasis to military assistance and committed increasing numbers of conventional forces to reinforce the counterinsurgency fight in Vietnam. Eventually there were two Army-dominated commands Military Assistance Command, Vietnam and U.S. Army, Vietnam directing the U.S./

allied COIN effort alongside the South Vietnamese. Army special warfare assets were divided with the majority of PSYOP and Civil Affairs units assigned to USARV; with Special Forces and some Civil Affairs units assigned to MACV. When the war ended 13 years later, the post-Vietnam Army purged COIN and IDAD from doctrine, although its special warfare forces (SF, PSYOP and CA) were still tasked with the mission. Communist-sponsored “wars of national liberation” had not gone away. Foreign internal defense was adopted to replace Vietnam-tainted IDAD; COIN was buried under UW. Then, international terrorism threatened the Western world in the late 1970s, and the Army again looked to special warfare.

The 1979 failed Iran hostage rescue at Desert One added special operations to the Army’s special warfare capabilities (UW, PSYOP and CA). The Army then consolidated its active duty special warfare assets under 1st Special Operations Command in 1983, adopting the new operational sobriquet. Just before Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Department of Army transferred the special warfare elements of the Army Reserve and Army National Guard to its newest Army Component Command, U.S. Army Special Operations Command. The units added the special warfare dimension to the Gulf War. They multiplied the

UW capabilities of coalition forces and provided the strategic reconnaissance, combat search and rescue and special operations for the combatant commander. Through subsequent operations in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, Army SOF, special warfare, and strike capabilities earned increasingly important roles in these campaigns.

Following 9/11, Army SOF assumed historic roles in the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In Afghanistan, 300 Army SF Soldiers supporting the Northern Alliance helped to topple the Taliban. In Iraq, the 10th SFG(A) advised 65,000 Kurdish Peshmerga, assumed tactical control of the 173rd Infantry Brigade (A) and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit and successfully tied down three Iraqi corps. Both ARSOF campaigns demonstrated the renewed relevance of UW and the subsequent combat advisory missions that highlight the value of contemporary special warfare. Over the past 13 years, the criticality of SOF campaigns elsewhere became evident. Lebanon, the Philippines, Pakistan and Yemen, along with earlier missions in El Salvador and Colombia, were milestones in Army SOF maturation. SOF had moved from its traditional role of supporting conventional campaigns and executing strategically important but episodic operations to being in many cases the main effort in SOF-centric campaigns.



ARSOF 2022 is the U.S. Army Special Operations Command blueprint for the future. Based on national security threats, it addresses capabilities, force structure, equipment, training, education and resource management through the coming decade. Army SOF is adapting from its past, incorporating the lessons of current operations, and looking to the future to update and clarify the Army special operations mission. It cements SOF-conventional force relationships that were hard-earned overseas in combat by today's Army leaders.

Recent institutional advancements include: publication of Army SOF Doctrine in ADP 3.05; standup of Operations Detachment J (SOF) of Mission Command Training Program; designation of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School as the Army's Special Operations Center of Excellence; the Army's adoption of a 7th Warfighting Function, "Engagement," that outlines SOF-CF interdependence. Tremendous progress has been made in the last three years.

Future considerations should include:

1. Designating the Commanding General, USASOC, as the Special Warfare Adviser to the Chief of Staff of

the Army and as the principal Army Staff Special Warfare Officer.

2. Developing and integrating ARSOF Operational Art and research development, test and evaluation programs across the Army and the joint force to enhance operational capabilities.
3. Undertaking a comprehensive Army-wide review of policies that should be changed to better accommodate the Army's responsibilities to build and maintain the nation's premier special warfare capability.

USASOC is U. S. Special Operations Command's largest component, but remains an integral part of today's Army. Its surgical strike units are the world's best, and its special warfare capability is more relevant, and necessary, today than ever. **SW**

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Notes

1. McClintock, "Toward a Doctrine of Special Warfare," 11.
2. Eugene G. Piasecki, "The Psywar Center, Part II: Creation of the 10th Special Forces Group," *Veritas, Journal of Army Special Operations History, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part V*, PB 31-05-2, Volume 8, No. 1, 2012, 103-105.
3. Michael E. Krivdo, "Right Man for the Job: Colonel Charles H. Karlstad," *Veritas, Journal of Army Special Operations History, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part V*, PB 31-05-2, Volume 8, No. 1, 2012, 77. At the time he was selected to Command the Psywar Center, COL Karlstad was the Infantry School Chief of Staff. From this position, COL Karlstad brought with him lessons learned that established the initial guidelines and priorities that shaped the development of each SOF unit into eventual service branches. Karlstad also created and saved the Psywar School as an independent Army service school responsible for Psywar and SF training.
4. McClintock, "Toward a Doctrine of Special Warfare," 17. Army Field Forces was the WWII fore-runner to the Continental Army Command (CONARC).
5. McClintock, "Toward a Doctrine of Special Warfare," 19.
6. Association of Graduates, USMA, Assembly, Volume 47, No. 1, April 1988, 150.
7. Colonel William H. Kinard Jr., "This Is Special Warfare U.S. Army Style," *Army Information Digest*, 15, 6, June 1960, 2-11.
8. Elliot V. Converse III, *Rearming for the Cold War, 1945-1960* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2012), 596. President Dwight Eisenhower's "New Look" policy and strategy stressed nuclear weapons, along with the deployment of the first operational guided missiles to provide security and make it possible to reduce military spending (p. vi). On the other hand, "flexible response," which had been articulated as early as 1956 by General Maxwell D. Taylor, represented a 'balanced' military capability that included strong conventional forces (p. 596).
9. Kinard, "The New Dimensions of Special Warfare," 61-62.
10. Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 2007), 165. Quote is from Presentation, General George Decker to General Staff
11. Birtle, *Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, 1988, 198.
12. Birtle, *Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, 1988, 199.
13. Birtle, *Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, 1988, 225.
14. President John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U. S. Military Academy,," 6 June 1962, on line by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8695>, accessed 14 February 2013.
15. Office, Chief of Information, Department of the Army, *Special Warfare U. S. Army, An Army Specialty, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1962, 5. Army Special Forces, Special Forces since its beginning in 1952, and the History of Camp Mackall, NC.*